

**2023**  
**SOUTH CAROLINA**  
**CHILDREN'S JUSTICE ACT TASK FORCE**  
  
**REPORT & APPLICATION**

**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA**  
**CHILDREN'S LAW CENTER**



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**South Carolina  
Children’s Justice Act Task Force  
Report and Application  
May 2023**

<b>I.</b>	<b>Grantee Identifying Information.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>II.</b>	<b>Task Force Membership and Function.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>III.</b>	<b>Annual Performance Report.....</b>	<b>3</b>
	A. Activities undertaken to improve the investigative, administrative, and judicial handling of cases of child abuse and neglect.....	4
	B. Steps taken to establish experimental, model, or demonstration programs.....	7
	C. Activities undertaken to reform state laws, ordinances, regulations, protocols, or procedures.....	13
<b>IV.</b>	<b>Prior Year Budget Expenditure.....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>V.</b>	<b>Application for Proposed Activities.....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>VI.</b>	<b>Proposed Budget .....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>IV.</b>	<b>Assurance Letter</b>	
<b>V.</b>	<b>Certification Regarding Lobbying Form</b>	
<b>VI.</b>	<b>Attachments</b>	
	1. Task Force Member Profiles .....	A-1
	2. Minutes of Task Force Meetings.....	A-4
	3. 2021-2024 Task Force Recommendations.....	A- 22
	4. SC CJA Bylaws.....	A-24
	5. Investigation and Prosecution Training Evaluations.....	A-29
	6. ChildFirst Evaluation Summary.....	A91
	7. Dually-Involved Youth Evaluation.....	A103

## **I. Grantee Identifying Information**

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UEI number: YPHCPMULMCD5
- **Responsible person for the CJA grant program:**  
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## **II. CJA Task Force Membership and Function**

South Carolina has maintained an active Children's Justice Act Task Force since 1994. The purpose and activities of the Task Force, as defined by its bylaws and federal statute, are as follows:

- To conduct an assessment of the state's systems responding to abused and neglected children at three-year intervals;
- To adopt recommendations in each of the CJA categories;
- To work towards implementation of these recommendations;
- To recommend to the state's grantee (S.C. Department of Social Services) projects to be supported by the CJA grant funds; and
- To express positions on legislation or state policy issues, consistent with its mission and recommendations.

The Task Force is governed by bylaws which were adopted in 1998. They were most recently formally reviewed on February 22, 2023, by the CJA Operations Committee. No modifications were recommended. In accordance with the bylaws, the Task Force meets at least quarterly. Standing committees are formed every three years to coincide with adoption of recommendations. Each committee meets as needed, to follow through with implementation of the recommendations adopted by the Task Force. All members are assigned to a committee. All Task Force meetings were held

virtually during this reporting period. However, as determined by a majority vote, we will have our October 2023 meeting in-person.

The Task Force conducted a review and assessment of the state's systems that respond to abused and neglected children in February 2021, leading to the formulation of recommendations for the 2021-2024 CJA cycle. As a result of priority topics identified through information gathered prior to the assessment workday, three corresponding committees for the 2021-2024 period were established:

- A. Training and Judicial Improvement Committee
- B. Model Programming Committee
- C. Child Protection Reform Committee

The Task Force is self-perpetuating through an election process held every three years. The membership period is three calendar years so that it overlaps accordingly with the CJA three-year cycle. This allows new members to be involved in the three-year assessment process and formulation of recommendations. Current members propose new members when necessary and prepare a slate of nominees, ensuring multidisciplinary and diverse membership. New members are elected for three-year terms by a majority vote of the Task Force. The chairperson appoints members to fill vacancies that occur between general elections. Officers include the chair and vice-chair who are also elected by the Task Force. Officers are limited to serving one three-year term. It is possible to elect someone to serve a second term in the same position, but not consecutively. This by-law was instituted to allow fresh leadership for every three-year cycle. Members for the 2021-2024 period were elected in October 2020 for the three-year term that began in January 2021. The Task Force currently has 29 members, reflecting all required disciplines, one of which is a new member to the Task Force, joining in November 2022 to fill an unexpected law enforcement vacancy. The elected chair for this term is Tom Knapp, the Executive Director of the SC Network of Children's Advocacy Centers. The vice-chair is Trista Baird who is a Lieutenant with the SC Law Enforcement Division.

The Children's Law Center provides staff support to the Task Force, including logistical arrangements for meetings and research activities. In addition to the CJA Coordinator who assists with implementation of recommendations, an additional staff person is assigned to each committee to facilitate the meetings and act as a liaison between the Task Force groups and the CJA Coordinator. The Children's Law Center also carries out training recommendations of the Task Force.

Attachment 1 includes a list of Task Force members with their titles, professional categories, and brief profiles. Attachment 2 contains minutes of the four meetings held during the past year. Current recommendations are in Attachment 3, Task Force bylaws are in Attachment 4, and Training Evaluations are in Attachments 5, 6, and 7.

### **III. Annual Performance Report: May 2022 - May 2023**

The South Carolina Department of Social Services (DSS) is the state's designated

grantee for Children's Justice Act funds. In accordance with one of the Task Force's recommendations, DSS contracted with the University of South Carolina's Children's Law Center to provide staff support for meetings and assist the Task Force in implementing its recommendations. This performance report covers Task Force activities from May 2022–May 2023.

**Evaluation efforts:** In response to the Children's Bureau feedback last year, this report contains information on stakeholder impact and how it informs decisions of the Task Force. In October of 2022, the Children's Law Center changed evaluation platforms from Survey Monkey to Microsoft Forms. The reason for this change was to increase security and to align with new university procurement policies. The Children's Law Center Research Scientist provided internal training on Microsoft Forms to ensure a smooth transition. In addition, she continues to serve as a resource to the trainers on curriculum development, presentation methods, instructional design, and adult learning principles. She is able to provide one-on-one observation for new trainers and provide comprehensive feedback timely. Every training evaluation collects prior knowledge and post knowledge of the learning objectives, ratings of presenter dynamics and engagement, ratings of visuals and handouts, and solicited recommendations for improvement. The evaluation process includes the assessment of impact on the knowledge, skills, and practices of training participants. Trainers review their evaluation outcomes soon after delivery and take feedback into consideration, implementing modifications as needed.

**Linkage with CFSP:** In response to the Children's Bureau feedback last year, this report also includes an example of a linkage the Task Force continues with its DSS partner, related to the state's Safety and Prevention efforts. In September of 2022, the South Carolina State Child Fatality Advisory Committee (SCFAC) elected Amanda Whittle as its Chairperson. Amanda Whittle is the State Child Advocate and Director of the South Carolina Department of Children's Advocacy, and a member of the SC Children's Justice Act Task Force. At the December 2022 meeting, the SCFAC adopted a new review format to incorporate AcciMapping for identifying trends and opportunities to prevent child fatalities.

In early 2023, the SCFAC began utilizing the AcciMap method to review and analyze child deaths. The Accimap method is a systems level method of analysis, guided in safety science. DSS partnered with the National Partnership for Child Safety, using safety science to build a body of knowledge about what works in preventing child maltreatment and fatalities. During 2022, members of the committee formed a subcommittee, applied the approach, and found the results to be helpful.

Tom Knapp, the Task Force chair, also serves on the SCFAC; and Captain Trista Baird (a CJA Task Force Member) of the South Carolina Law Enforcement Division (SLED) presented *Child Death Investigations Task Force Training 101* to provide the committee with information about the task force's investigatory processes and the roles of coroners, law enforcement, and other entities involved in child death investigations, which will enhance their understanding and efforts. The SCFAC, supported by Task Force members, is uniquely positioned to communicate and strategize fatality prevention recommendations and initiatives, to be more purposeful about the

committee's mission of decreasing incidences of preventable child deaths.

The CJA Coordinator continues to meet with the SCDSS Office and Safety Management Director (who also serves as a Task Force member) to review current Task Force recommendations and strengthen and explore linkages.

***Category A. Activities undertaken to improve the investigative, administrative, and judicial handling of cases of child abuse and neglect:***

- **Provide multidisciplinary trainings regarding the unique aspects involved in the recognition, investigation, and prosecution of maltreatment of children with disabilities, to include recognition within virtual settings.** (Recommendation 1.A)

A needs assessment was developed by the CJA Coordinator and CLC Research Scientist per the request of this committee subgroup and administered to the full Task Force. Once compiled, the subgroup reviewed the survey results to inform their direction. It was determined the training would be in person and developed for child death investigators, other law enforcement, educators, and DSS abuse case managers in particular. Survey respondents want a baseline understanding of children with disabilities and how to approach them using an appropriate cognitive and developmental process that will assist in facilitating the investigation. Once they have this knowledge, they will need education on risk factors, pattern recognition, and the likelihood of abuse in children with disabilities. The training is scheduled for June 6, 2023. The following learning objectives were derived from the survey needs assessment and will be delivered:

1. Having a general understanding of various disabilities and special needs
2. Recognizing children/youth with disabilities and special needs
3. Gaining awareness of self-injurious behaviors directly related to specific disabilities
4. Responding to children/youth with disabilities and special needs

- **Continue to build upon trainings regarding multidisciplinary child death investigations, including the identification of barriers to effectively implementing the Child Death Investigation Task Forces (CDITF).** (Recommendation 2.A)

A new simulation training - *Conducting Reenactments in Child Death Investigations* - was developed and is being offered monthly. This is a 1-day, in-person, small group training that focuses on conducting reenactments with caregivers in child death investigations and incorporates hands-on practice in a mock crime scene apartment. Professional actors are used to represent parents and children. This training is designed for law enforcement officers and coroners or their designees who have completed the *Child Death Investigations: The Basics* training offered by the Children's Law Center. This

simulation training was offered eight times in this reporting period, serving 32 participants. The training group is purposefully kept small for optimal learning.

- **Provide multidisciplinary training events, to include the faith community, on family violence, utilizing leading experts on research in this area.** (Recommendation 3.A)

Multiple state and national trainings have been researched and shared with child welfare colleagues and faith-based leaders in South Carolina. Examples are: Ending Violence to Children Conference (virtual); Faith Leaders' Summit (virtual); Bringing Together Faith and Child Protection Communities (virtual) and Positive Parenting: Family Violence Prevention (virtual). We are currently exploring a brief documentary called "Spare the Child" to see how this could be beneficial. The Task Force plans to view this as a group during our next meeting.

- **Provide multidisciplinary training to include volunteer guardians ad litem and community stakeholders (providers, school counselors, DSS, etc.) on working with cases involving crossover youth with DSS and DJJ).** (Recommendation 4.A.)

A DSS Stakeholders symposium was conducted on this topic in February 2022. Task Force members, in particular those on this recommendation subcommittee, were encouraged to attend. We then used the report findings to further inform our training, which occurred May 2, 2023 (98 professionals participated). We collaborated with the South Carolina Foster Parent Association to broaden our scope of attendees and reach more direct providers. This live webinar was recorded so that it can be utilized for future learning.

- **Continue to provide, and expand upon, trainings focused on reducing stress and trauma to children who must testify in either, or both, family court and general sessions court. This includes coordination with SC Court Administration to provide training opportunities to the judiciary regarding developmentally appropriate, and legally defensible, courtrooms for child victims and/or witnesses appearing in court.** (Recommendation 5.A)

With the guidance of Dr. Thomas D. Lyon of the University of Southern California Gould School of Law, we modified a tool to assess children's understanding of the duty of a witness to tell the truth. This tool includes tasks designed to both minimize the difficulties children face in defining and discussing truth and lies, and to ensure that children will not falsely appear competent due to guessing or following the lead of the questioner. The tool

has been given to multiple solicitors' offices across the state.

Two trainings were provided by the Children's Law Center's Investigation and Prosecution Team on the Criminal Justice System and Court Procedures on October 17, 2022, and January 12, 2023. The trainings' objectives are below:

- Identify appropriate techniques and tools to prepare child for the courtroom
- Describe the evidentiary rules and requirements for competency
- Identify a child-friendly task to establish competency
- Identify a child-friendly oath to be administered
- Recognize developmentally appropriate questions for children
- Identify child-friendly strategies to present child testimony
- Identify how to use testimonial aids such as dolls, diagrams, and photographs during a child's testimony

In addition, the Children's Law Center's Senior Resource Attorney has offered to provide a presentation related to "Questioning Children" and the tool's use at the South Carolina Commission on Prosecution's annual solicitor's conference to be held in October 2023. Tools will be given to all attendees.

In another effort to help reduce trauma for children who must testify, the Children's Law Center continues to distribute family court and general sessions children's court coloring notebooks to attorneys, DSS staff, guardians ad litem, and CACs throughout the state.

- **Support the Court Improvement Program to improve the quality of child abuse and neglect hearings by ensuring all necessary parties are served with notice of the hearing and that they are engaged and participate meaningfully in the proceedings; and by looking at causes for continuances and ways to alleviate those that are unavoidable.**

(Recommendation 6.A).

A subgroup of the Task Force, which includes two attorneys and one GAL program manager, was created to review the state's Best Legal Practices document which provides guidelines for handling child abuse and neglect cases. These guidelines were established to help reduce court delays, expedite permanency for children, and provide overall efficiency for these cases. The South Carolina Family Court Bench-Bar Committee, upon recommendation of the S.C. Governor's Task Force on Children in Foster Care and Adoption Services, developed these guidelines. The document review request came to the CJATF Coordinator while collaborating with our CIP Director to continuously improve timely legal processes and expediting permanency. This was completed in December 2022.



**Category B. Steps taken to establish experimental, model, or demonstration programs:**

- **Develop and deliver a training curriculum for local multidisciplinary teams on the SC Child Abuse Response Protocol, modify the trainings for each county, and include schools in the MDTs.** (Recommendation 7.B)

The SC Child Abuse Response Protocol training continues to be a resource for multidisciplinary providers and stakeholders across the state. Since the initial launch, 1,332 professionals have registered for the pre-recorded, self-paced training, and received the practice manual.

As a reminder, the purpose of the Protocol is to ensure a multidisciplinary response to child abuse and neglect that utilizes Children's Advocacy Centers and multidisciplinary teams. State law requires the use of the Protocol as developed by the SCNCAC and the Task Force.

- **Collaborate with the statewide Forensic Nurse Examiner Task Force to develop and implement tools that will expand and improve resources to handle the preliminary investigation of child sexual abuse.** (Recommendation 8.B).

While collaborating with the Forensic Nurse Examiners Task Force, a proposal was made for the Task Force to prepare a letter of support for the Sexual Assault Forensic Excellence (SAFE) designation program. Following three planning meetings with the Task Force Chair, CJATF Coordinator, and a Task Force member who also serves as the Associate Professor of Clinical Pediatrics at the University of South Carolina School of Medicine Department of Pediatrics, and Medical Director on the SC Children's Advocacy Medical Response System, a letter was prepared, approved, and delivered to the SAFE program leadership.

- **Collaborate with the statewide Human Trafficking Task Force to identify and address gaps in resources that are needed to support suspected victims of sex trafficking along the process from identification to court.** (Recommendation 9.B).

During the Children's Law Center's annual Children's Law Conference, we strategically included a workshop on human trafficking by the Director of Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) and Human Trafficking Programs at the South Carolina Office of the Attorney General and South Carolina Human Trafficking Task Force. Following the workshop, the attendees were able to define human trafficking and understand laws related to minor sex and labor

trafficking. Those present were also able to understand the composition of the State Task Force, efforts underway to prevent and respond to crime, and the roles of various state agencies in meeting the needs of minor trafficking victims.

- **Support the expansion of the CAC involvement in the Safe Babies Court initiative in South Carolina and monitor the project to determine additional ways to support growth and success of Safe Babies Courts.** (Recommendation 10.B).

The Safe Babies Courts initiative continues in four counties. The Task Force will continue to monitor these programs with involvement from the SCNCAC.

- **Obtain and/or enhance protections in SC for recordings of forensic interviews of child abuse victims.** (Recommendation 11.B).

A forensic interview evidence management system has been implemented by CACs with DSS to eliminate hard copies of recordings. The SC Network of Children's Advocacy Centers (SCNCAC) and DSS are working collaboratively to educate judges, defense attorneys, MDT partners, and all others who may require access to forensic interview recordings now that DVDs are no longer produced. Access will be shared via secure digital links and judges will be requested to put this in any needed court orders. If education efforts are not successful, SCNCAC could file proposed legislation next year to protect these interview recordings.

- **Continue to support the SC Network of Children's Advocacy Centers including organizational capacity and infrastructural resources.** (Recommendation 12.B)

The Task Force promotes growth of Children's Advocacy Centers (CACs) in South Carolina by supporting the South Carolina Network of Children's Advocacy Centers (SCNCAC), the accredited state chapter of the National Children's Alliance. CJA funds are used in part to provide office space, equipment, supplies, and limited administrative support to the Network's staff. The Network's Executive Director, the Chair of the Task Force, is appointed by the Network's Board of Directors. CACs are identified in South Carolina law (S.C. Code § 63-11-310).

In 2022, CACs in South Carolina provided services to 12,897 children. This represents a 16% increase over the number of children served in 2021.

Of the 12,897 children helped by South Carolina CACs in 2022, 70% were under 13 years old. Sexual abuse was the most frequent type of abuse reported with 43% of children reporting some form of sexual abuse. Children reporting physical abuse accounted for 27% of children served by CACs.

There are 17 primary CACs in South Carolina, and many are regional CACs that cover multiple counties. There are also 11 satellite CACs operated by regional CACs in the state. Together, these 28 CACs provide an array of child-focused services to children.

**CAC Development Plan:** SCNCAC offers multiple training and networking opportunities each year for CAC staff and MDT partners. These include live in-person and virtual trainings, self-paced eLearning courses, and membership networking and leadership meetings. Initial Victim Service Provider Training and Forensic Interview Peer Review are offered multiple times each year.

During 2022, SCNCAC offered 72 individual events which accounted for 1,977 event registrations. Attendees at these events accumulated 6,970 contact hours for professional development and certification purposes. Due to ongoing pandemic concerns, 43 of these events were virtual and 3 were in-person trainings. Networking meetings included 5 hybrid and 9 virtual meetings. There were also 12 e-Learning courses that were active during the year.

**Statewide CAC Database:** On June 16, 2022, an integration between the SCNCAC Collaborate and Department of Social Services (DSS) CAPSS databases to provide automated referrals from DSS to CACs for cases that meet the CAC case acceptance criteria in the South Carolina Child Abuse Response Protocol Act went live. This integration provides hourly automated referrals from DSS to South Carolina CACs through the database bridge and helps to safeguard equity for all South Carolina children by helping to ensure that referrals for services are made regardless of background or demographics. The system continues to be monitored and enhanced.

**Forensic Interview Peer Review Program:** The South Carolina Network of Children's Advocacy Center's (SCNCAC) statewide forensic interview peer review program is designed to provide forensic interviewers with an opportunity to review forensic interviews, discuss specific interview techniques, provide feedback regarding the quality of the interview, ensure consistent documentation, and review relevant research. SCNCAC facilitates quarterly sessions each year across South Carolina and one statewide session with training in Columbia, which will be provided November 2023.

**Victim Advocate Training Program:** The South Carolina Network of Children's Advocacy Center's (SCNCAC) statewide victim & family advocate training program is designed for victim and family advocates who are working with children and families within a South Carolina Children's Advocacy Center. The program has been approved for core VSP certification in SC and meets training requirements for victim advocates in the National Children's Alliance CAC accreditation standards. There were seven sessions conducted this period.

**TF-CBT and Telehealth Delivery Training Program:** In 2022, SCNCAC

completed a 2-year Duke Endowment grant project to train therapists in the Carolinas' to deliver Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT) via telehealth. During the project, over 225 clinicians were trained in initial TF-CBT, delivery of the TF-CBT model via telehealth, and advanced TF-CBT telehealth delivery methods. The grant also provided Children's Advocacy Centers with stipends to offset clinicians' time in training and computer tablets to loan to clients for use during telehealth treatment sessions.

**Technical Assistance:** SCNCAC responded to 1,540 technical assistance (TA) requests from CACs and MDTs in 2022. SCNCAC staff spent 850.75 hours on these TA requests.

- **Continue to support the operation of the Children's Law Center which is a training and information resource center for professionals involved in child maltreatment proceedings. Operations include implementing the training recommendations in collaboration with the Task Force and providing research and logistical support to the Task Force.** (Recommendation 13.B)

Task Force Recommendation 13.B calls for the operation of the Children's Law Center, a training and information resource center for professionals involved in child maltreatment proceedings. The Children's Law Center was originally established upon the recommendation of the Task Force and continues to function as its staff support and training arm. The University of South Carolina School of Law administers the Children's Law Center as a model program to enhance the knowledge and skills of all professionals involved in child abuse and neglect proceedings, leading to better outcomes for children. The mission and functions of the Children's Law Center reflect the CJA goals of improving investigative and judicial handling of child abuse and neglect cases and enhancing the effectiveness of court-appointed attorneys and guardians ad litem. The Children's Law Center is able to access other funding sources to complement CJA funds, thus providing a comprehensive array of services. The Children's Law Center offers a variety of training programs on child maltreatment to child protection caseworkers, family court staff, guardians ad litem, law enforcement officers, prosecutors, and other child-serving professionals to include professionals who are mandated by law to report suspected child abuse and neglect.

**Website and resource materials:** The Children's Law Center maintains a website containing online publications, training information, additional resources, and links to related organizations. Staff develop and distribute resource materials on child protection and prosecution of child abuse and neglect. Most recently, the Abuse and Neglect Hearings Benchbook was updated. The Children's Law Center also responds to individual requests for information and technical assistance from professionals in the field. The online training portal for mandated reporters is offered to anyone at no cost.

**The below training topics are offered multiple times a year:**

- ChildFirst
- Child Physical Abuse and Neglect Investigations
- Interviewing in Child Maltreatment Cases
- Conducting Reenactments in Child Death Investigations
- Medical Aspects of Sexual Abuse
- Medical Aspects of Physical Abuse
- Understanding Medical Aspects of Abusive Head Trauma
- Recognizing Medical Neglect and Failure to Thrive
- Recognizing and Responding to Problematic Sexual Behaviors in Youth

**Category C: Activities undertaken to reform state laws, ordinances, regulations, protocols, or procedures:**

- **Provide support for any child abuse legislation that the Children's Justice Act Task Force deems will improve the state's response to abused and neglected children, including the commercial sex trafficking of children. (Recommendation 14.C)**

The Task Force tracked the following bills during the course of the year that were related to CJA topics. Members provided input about such legislation when appropriate.

The following bills have passed:

H.3458 – Private Behavioral Health Providers in Schools

Mandates districts develop policies to allow private mental and behavioral therapists into schools. An amendment will be made to ensure ABA therapists are not excluded.

H.3908 – Paid Parental Leave for School District Employees

Provides paid parental leave for the birth of a child, initial legal placement of a foster child, or adoption of a child for eligible school district employees.

Senate Bill Status Crossed Over

S.342 Homeless youth definitions

S.380 KinGAP

S.142 Safe Harbor

S.145 Sex Buyer Penalties

S.341 Guardianship Timelines for Minors

S.612 DSS Investigation Timelines

- **Investigate the feasibility of integrating data systems that would allow for a comprehensive collaborative database that would track child abuse cases from initial referral through closure of services. In addition, investigate data sets that are already available in order to**

**measure positive outcomes into adulthood.** (Recommendation 15.C).

Following statewide and national research of this issue by Task Force members and multiple in-depth meetings of the work group, it was determined that the integration of database systems across the state to track child abuse cases may not be feasible at this time. A smaller group of Task Force members continues to look into the possibility of collecting/analyzing data on a smaller scale to measure outcomes. This committee has asked that this recommendation cross over to our next CJA cycle.

- **Encourage child serving agency examination of racial disparities of children involved with the child welfare system.** (Recommendation 16.C). The CJATF Coordinator is working with the DSS Office of Safety Management to be included in the agency's Racial Justice Action Team. Our intent is to have one or more of our task force members join to support this recommendation.

#### **IV. Prior Year Budget Expenditure**

***Trainings addressing children with disabilities - \$5,500***

*Staff collaboration, evaluation, training expenses*

***Child death investigations training/outreach - \$6,500***

*Staff collaboration, materials, training expenses*

***Training events on family violence - \$1,000***

*Staff collaboration, evaluation, training expenses*

***Training on crossover youth - \$5,000***

*Staff collaboration, evaluation, training expenses*

***Child testimony training - \$3,000***

*Staff collaboration, evaluation, training expenses, printing of resources*

***Statewide protocol training - \$5,000***

*Staff collaboration, curriculum development, outreach, materials, training expenses*

***Collaboration with the Forensic Nurse Examiner Task Force - \$500***

*Staff collaboration, resource/tool printing or ordering*

***Collaboration with the SC Human Trafficking Task Force - \$2,300***

*Staff collaboration, resource/tool printing or ordering*

***Monitor the Safe Babies Court project - \$0***

*Staff time for research and/or meetings*

**Monitor efforts to obtain protections for forensic interview recordings - \$500**

*Staff time for research and/or meetings*

**Convene data system advisory group – \$1,000**

*Meeting support costs, staff collaboration and research*

**Confer with other agencies re: examination of racial disparities - \$1,000**

*Staff time for research and/or meetings*

**Support of the South Carolina Network of Children's Advocacy Centers/ Peer review program for forensic interviewers – \$27,288**

*Office space, telephone, computer, office supplies, use of general office equipment, administrative support, printing, staff time for collaborative events, speaker fees, training costs*

**Operation of the Children's Law Center - \$49,453**

*Personnel, project supplies, training, information, and assistance related to CJA; training and information for law enforcement officers and prosecutors, supplemental funding for trainings related to CJA topics.*

**Direct Task Force support- \$99,972**

*Meeting supplies, refreshments, printing, staff time for logistical support of the Task Force, support for committee meetings, mileage, other collaborations*

**CJA grantees meeting- \$5,050**

*Travel for two CJA representatives to attend the federal grantees meeting*

**USC facilities & administrative cost - \$50,311**

*Facilities, utilities, administrative overhead; Federal negotiated rate of 26% of modified total direct costs*

**Total \$263,374**

## **V. Application for Proposed Activities**

*During the grant period, the Task Force will work toward accomplishing the recommendations developed in 2021. The Children's Law Center will assist the Task Force in its efforts. All of these objectives relate directly to specific recommendations of the Task Force.*

**1. Provide multidisciplinary trainings regarding the unique aspects involved in the recognition, investigation, and prosecution of maltreatment of children with disabilities, to include recognition within virtual settings.** Training is scheduled for June 6, 2023. The following learning objectives will be delivered:

1. Having a general understanding of various disabilities and special needs
2. Recognizing children/youth with disabilities and special needs
3. Gaining awareness of self-injurious behaviors directly related to specific disabilities

#### 4. Responding to children/youth with disabilities and special needs

In addition, the committee will explore creating a discipline specialized webinar for educators to offer in the upcoming year. (Recommendation 1.A)

**2. Continue to build upon trainings regarding multidisciplinary child death investigations, including the identification of barriers to effectively implementing the Child Death Investigation Task Forces (CDITF) rapid response.** The Task Force will support the development of an additional training expanding upon *Investigative Interviewing for Child Death Investigations*. Ideally, it would be offered in a two-day class. Day one would be lecture style, with examples of real-life interviews used to convey teaching points. Day two would involve trainees conducting mock interviews in the mock apartment, as they work through pre-developed scenarios. The purpose of this training would be to drill down on investigative techniques, beyond what is covered in the basic class. In addition, we are updating a version of our three-day *Medicolegal Infant Death Investigations* training to be provided in September 2023. Another resource in the planning phase is the publication of a Child Death Investigations Manual. (Recommendation 2.A)

**3. Provide multidisciplinary training events, to include the faith community, on family violence, utilizing leading experts on research in this area.** Through continued research, another potential resource was discovered. The documentary (*Spare the Child*) was created by The Justice Film Collective and explores the childhoods and subsequent adulthoods of three diverse survivors of childhood spanking. Through interviews, each participant's journey is presented. *Spare the Child* illustrates the lifelong impact that spanking has on humans. The film is being screened nationally and internationally with organizations such as Prevent Child Abuse America and the American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children as a tool to facilitate conversations about spanking prevention. The documentary was viewed at April's meeting by the full CJA Task Force to see how we may decide to use this going forward. (Recommendation 3.A)

**4. Provide multidisciplinary training to include volunteer guardians ad litem and community stakeholders (providers, school counselors, DSS, etc.) on working with cases involving crossover youth with DSS and DJJ.** The webinar training conducted on May 6, 2023, was recorded for continued professional education. The Task Force will continue to encourage learning and ensure best practice is provided. (Recommendation 4.A)

**5. Continue to provide, and expand upon, trainings focused on reducing stress and trauma to children who must testify in either, or both, Family Court and General Sessions Court. This includes coordination with SC Court Administration to provide training opportunities to the judiciary regarding developmentally appropriate, and legally defensible, courtrooms for child victims and/or witnesses appearing in court.** The Task Force will continue offering child testimony trainings. In addition, we hope to have our Senior Resource Attorney provide a presentation at the annual solicitor's conference related to "Questioning



Children,” to include an overview of the Truth/Lie Tool. Our request is being reviewed as they make determinations about the content of this year’s conference, to be held at the end of October 2023. (Recommendation 5.A)

**6. Support the Court Improvement Program to improve the quality of child abuse and neglect hearings by ensuring all necessary parties are served with notice of the hearing and that they are engaged and participate meaningfully in the proceedings; and by looking at causes for continuances and ways to alleviate those that are avoidable.** The Task Force continues to collaborate with the Court Improvement Program to assist with training needs that arise from their data collection. In addition, we are in discussions regarding training being provided by Children’s Law Center staff for paralegals in our state to assist with system improvement. This may be conducted in September 2023. (Recommendation 6.A)

**7. Develop and deliver a training curriculum for local multidisciplinary teams on the SC Child Abuse Response Protocol, modify the trainings for each county, and include schools in the MDTs.** The Protocol was launched at the end of last year, and we will continue to advertise this resource statewide. Along with that comes the on-going evaluations and modifications where needed. An expectation of the Protocol is to receive feedback from a task force established by the Governor. That task force has not yet been created; however, our CJA Task Force Chair follows this closely so that we will receive information as soon as possible. In addition, a small group is being created to discuss developing a shorter version of the protocol training for law enforcement first responders who would only go to the scene, conduct a minimal facts interview if necessary, and then turn the case over to a detective or other investigator. Law enforcement investigators would still take the full course. (Recommendation 7.B)

**8. Collaborate with the statewide Forensic Nurse Examiner Task Force to develop and implement tools that will expand and improve resources to handle the preliminary investigation of child sexual abuse.** One of our Task Force members serves on the statewide Forensic Nurse Examiner Task Force as well. The Task Force Chair and Coordinator communicate with her and continue to offer any needed support. (Recommendation 8.B)

**9. Collaborate with the statewide Human Trafficking Task Force (HTTF) to identify and address gaps in resources that are needed to support suspected victims of sex trafficking along the process from identification to court.** The Task Force Chair and Coordinator will continue to attend stakeholder and Task Force meetings regularly and offer support when a gap aligns within our CJA scope. The HTTF has accomplished much in the last two years under strong leadership and is growing their staff while building additional capacity to meet needs. (Recommendation 9.B)

**10. Support the expansion of CAC involvement in the Safe Babies Court initiative in South Carolina and monitor the project to determine additional ways to support growth and success of Safe Babies Courts.** The Safe Babies Court initiative is up and running in the four identified counties. One county has substantially fewer

referrals than the others, and the Task Force will monitor their status and offer support where able. (Recommendation 10.B)

**11. Obtain and/or enhance protections in SC for recordings of forensic interviews of child abuse victims.** A forensic interview evidence management system has been implemented by the SCNCAC with DSS to eliminate hard copies of recordings. The Task Force will collaborate with the SCNCAC to remain apprised of developments in the use of technology systems by CACs that ensure confidentiality. SCNCAC will file proposed legislation, if needed, during the next CJA cycle. (Recommendation 11.B)

**12. Continue support of the SC Network of Children's Advocacy Centers, including organizational capacity and infrastructural resources:** The CJA Task Force supports Children's Advocacy Centers and, together with the Children's Law Center, will assist their network, which is a state chapter of the National Children's Alliance. The Children's Law Center will continue to provide furnished office space for the Executive Director of the SC Network of Children's Advocacy Centers and three staff members, along with telephones, computers, office supplies, and use of equipment and meeting rooms. Additionally, the Children's Law Center will provide administrative support and will co-sponsor selected SCNCAC training events. (Recommendation 12.B)

**13. Continue support of the operation of the Children's Law Center which is a training and information resource center for professionals involved in child maltreatment proceedings. Operations include implementing the training recommendations in collaboration with the Task Force and providing research and logistical support to the Task Force:** DSS contracts with the Children's Law Center to support the functions of the Task Force and to operate a training and information resource center for professionals involved in child maltreatment proceedings. The Children's Law Center is responsible for implementing the training recommendations in collaboration with the Task Force, preparing resource materials as directed by the Task Force, and assisting with accomplishment of policy recommendations. The Children's Law Center provides research and logistical support for all meetings of the Task Force and its committees. Supporting the operation of the Children's Law Center promotes successful delivery of coordinated and effective training and information for professionals involved in the response to child abuse allegations, investigations, and prosecutions. Measurable outcome goals of training will be identified and tracked to assess and modify any trainings. (Recommendation 13.B)

**14. Provide support for any child abuse legislation that the Task Force deems will improve the state's response to abused and neglected children including the commercial sex trafficking of children:** Current legislation being followed:

**S. 142 Safe Harbor for Minor Victims** expands the definition of sex trafficking to include sexual exploitation of a minor and promoting or participating in the prostitution of a minor. S. 142 extends the existing safe harbor provision to any other

non-violent offenses committed by a minor as a direct result of trafficking. It states minors cannot be found in violation of or be the subject of a delinquency petition if an investigation determines their conduct was a direct result of trafficking.

**S. 145 Sex Buyer Penalties** increases the penalties for solicitation of commercial sex, establishes an affirmative defense for victims of human trafficking, bans prostitution charges for minors, and expands the definition of procurement.

**S. 612 DSS Investigation Timelines** creates a tiered response system for when DSS must begin an investigation of a report alleging child abuse or neglect. The agency must respond within 24 hours if: a child is at imminent and substantial risk of physical or mental injury; the family may flee, or the child is unavailable for the investigation; or DSS has taken custody of the child, or the child is in emergency protective custody. S. 612 allows DSS up to two business days to investigate a report alleging child abuse or neglect outside the above-listed critical scenarios.

The Task Force will continue to monitor and support legislation that will improve the state's response to abused and neglected children and that is related to CJA topics. The Task Force will also assist in efforts to educate child serving professionals to make them aware of the passage of any applicable legislation during the CJA cycle. The CJATF Coordinator works closely with the Legislative Resource Attorney for the SC Joint Citizens and Legislative Committee on Children in this effort. (Recommendation 14.C)

**15. Investigate the feasibility of integrating data systems that would allow for a comprehensive collaborative database that would track child abuse cases from initial referral through closure of services. In addition, investigate data sets that are already available in order to measure positive outcomes into adulthood:** The committee has requested this Recommendation be carried over to the next CJA Cycle. (Recommendation 15.C)

**16. Encourage child serving agency examination of racial disparities of children involved with the child welfare system.** There will be an in-person Diversity, Equity and Inclusion training with presenter, the Reverend Dr. Percy Johnson, Jr., PhD, from Atlanta, GA on September 13, 2023. This effort is being spearheaded by our CJA Chair and supported by the SCNCAC. We are strategizing on the most effective way to expand this opportunity to other child serving agencies.

## VI. Proposed Budget

### Projected Budget Summary:

#### ***Development, implementation, and support of CJA Recommendations - \$27,112***

*Collaboration, trainer and facility fees, curriculum updates, evaluation, research, printing, training supplies, and outreach*

- *Children with disabilities training*
- *Child death investigations training*

- *Training/educational events on family violence*
- *Training on crossover youth*
- *Child testimony training*
- *Court improvement training*
- *Statewide protocol training*
- *Collaboration with the Forensic Nurse Examiner Task*
- *Collaboration with the SC Human Trafficking Task Force*
- *Monitor the Safe Babies Court project*
- *Monitor efforts to obtain protections for forensic interview recordings*
- *Convene data system advisory group*
- *Confer with other agencies re: examination of racial disparities*

***Completion of the Three-Year Assessment - \$2,000***

*Survey instrument (Qualtrics) development and application, stakeholder outreach*

***Support of the South Carolina Network of Children's Advocacy Centers/ Peer review program for forensic interviewers - \$27,228***

*Office space, telephone, computer, office supplies, use of general office equipment, administrative support, printing, staff time for collaborative events, speaker fees, training costs*

***Operation of the Children's Law Center - \$47,883***

*Personnel, project supplies, training, information, and assistance related to CJA; training and information for law enforcement officers and prosecutors, supplemental funding for trainings related to CJA topics*

***Direct Task Force support- \$102,972***

*Staff time for logistical support of the Task Force, support for committee meetings, refreshments, mileage, other collaborations*

***CJA grantees meeting - \$3,500***

*Travel for two/three CJA representatives to attend the federal grantees meeting in D.C.*

***USC facilities & administrative cost - \$53,246***

*Facilities, utilities, administrative overhead; Federal negotiated rate of 26% of modified total direct costs*

***Total Tentative: \$263, 941***